

Planning a European Capital for a New State

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PL1



PL2



PL3

The Polish group within the CIAM was established briefly after the CIAM itself was founded. From 1929 to the end of CIAM it was one of the most active national groups.¹ Szymon and Helena Syrkus were especially influential members. [1/2] Both held important positions in the CIAM hierarchy and significantly contributed to the debates of the 1930s, in particular on the Functional City.



1 Giedion, H. Syrkus and Le Corbusier on the *Patris II*

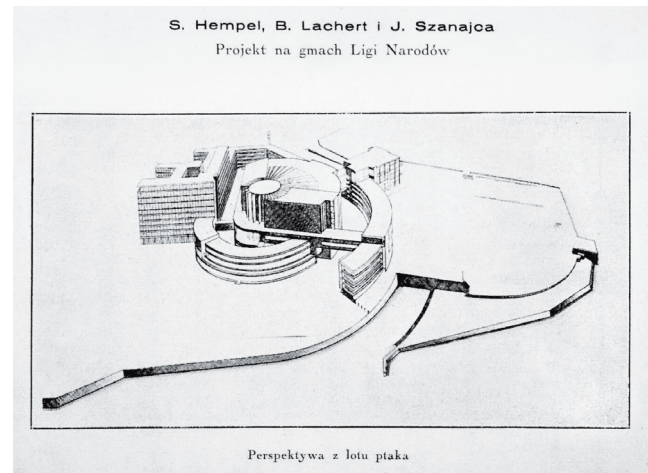
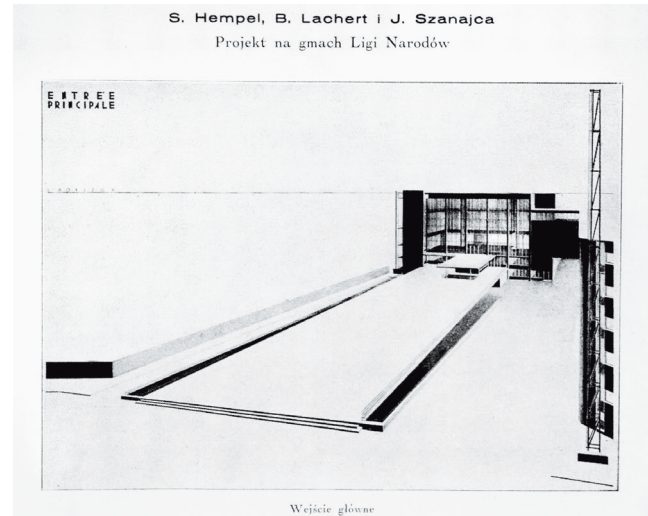


2 S. Syrkus, 1928

The Polish CIAM Group

The Polish CIAM group was established by Szymon Syrkus in 1929 after he received an invitation by Sigfried Giedion. Syrkus and another Polish architect, Józef Szanajca, had attracted Giedion's attention through their radically modern contributions to the competition for the Palace of the League of Nations. [3] Giedion was also impressed by the journal *praesens*, [4] which was published by a group of Polish architects and artists of the same name, including Szymon Syrkus and Szanajca.²

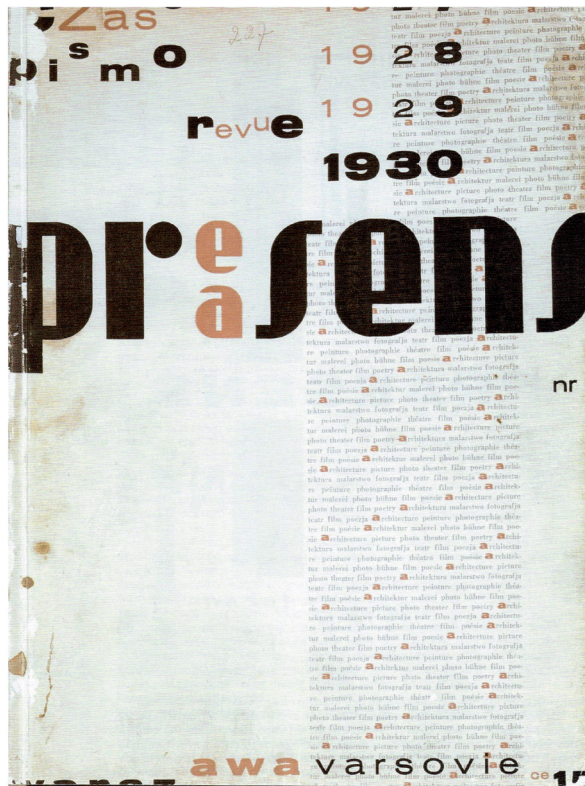
Szymon Syrkus gladly accepted the invitation³ and drew on the 'praesens' group, which had shifted its focus towards architecture in the years prior, to form the Polish CIAM group.⁴ With only some minor changes, the group remained intact until the outbreak of the Second World War. For 1929, the records state 15 Polish CIAM members, a list of April 1931, the period relevant in the



3 S. Syrkus and Szanajca, competition entry for the Palace of the League of Nations, 1927

context of this book, gives the following members: Barbara Brukalska, Stanisław Brukalski, Wacław Chyrosz, Stanisław Hempel, Antatolja Hryniewiecka-Piotrowska, Bohdan Lachert, Jan Najmann, Roman Piotrowski, Zygmunt Skibniewski, Helena Syrkus, Szymon Syrkus, Józef Szanajca and Aleksander Szniolis.⁵ In 1933 Irena Lachert joined the group.

- 1 This opinion was also held in Zurich. See: Giedion, letter to Fuchs, 10.07.1935, Bauhaus-Archiv, Gropius file 12/449. See also: Eric Dluhosch and Rotislav Svácha (eds.), *Karel Teige. 1900–1951. L'Enfant Terrible* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 253; and the respective statement by Sert: Olgierd Czerner, *Avant-garde polonaise. Urbanisme, architecture 1918–1939* (Paris: Éditions du Moniteur, 1981), 63.
- 2 Giedion, letter to S. Syrkus, 12.07.1928, gta/CIAM. On the formation of the Polish group see also the taped interview with H. Syrkus, gta/CIAM and Józef Piłatowicz, 'Poglądy Heleny i Szymona Syrkusów na architekturę w latach 1925–1956', in: *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* vol. 54 no. 3–4 (2009), 123–164, here 129–135.
- 3 S. Syrkus expressed the strong interest 'of Poland' in the congresses and offered to help with their organization. S. Syrkus, letter to Giedion and K. Moser, 19.07.1929, gta/CIAM.
- 4 On *praesens* see: Steven A. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe. From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* (Cambridge: University Press, 1999), 123–131; Roberta Chionne, 'Blok e Praesens. Dagli ideali del costruttivismo alla sperimentazione funzionale', in: Silvia Parlagreco (ed.), *Costruttivismo in Polonia* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005), 157–198; Ryszard Stanisławski (ed.), *Constructivism in Poland 1923–1936. BLOK, Praesens, a.r.*, exh. cat. Folkwang Museum Essen, Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller Otterlo 1973 (Stuttgart: Cantz'sche Druckerei, 1973).
- 5 S. Syrkus, letter to Giedion, 10.04.1931, gta/CIAM. The new members were officially approved during the CIAM 4 congress. See: Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 83.

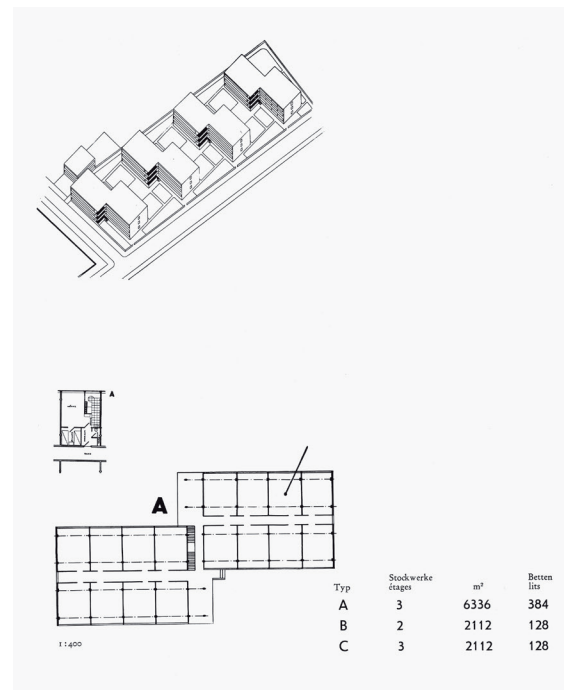


4 Praesens, no. 2, 1930, cover

The group members all lived and worked in Poland's capital Warsaw. Most of them had been educated at the faculty of architecture of Warsaw's Polytechnic University, founded in 1915 and featuring a progressive and international curriculum. The high percentage of women in the group is indicative of a general tendency of this cohort of architects in Poland as is the comparatively young age of the members – most were in their early thirties.⁶

The Polish delegates were Szymon Syrkus and Szanajca (from 1937 on Piotrowski), of whom Syrkus exerted by far the strongest influence.⁷ He delivered several reports to the CIAM and held various positions in the CIAM hierarchy, including heading the committee on regional planning from 1936 onwards. Other active members were Piotrowski and the Brukalski couple. Helena Syrkus – who was vice-president of the CIAM after the war – served as interpreter, translator, keeper of the minutes and support for Giedion on several occasions.⁸

During the first thematic CIAM congress in 1929 in Frankfurt am Main, which focussed on the 'Minimum Dwelling', Polish contributions from co-operative housing organizations served as examples, as well as at the CIAM 3 congress in Brussels in the following year.⁹ [5/6] With an immense need for social housing and urban improvement in Warsaw, the common ground of the modern Polish architects and the CIAM agenda was substantial.¹⁰ It was in this light that the Polish group, and here again Szymon Syrkus in particular, strongly tried to spread the CIAM programme in Poland. The journals *praesens* and *Dom, Osiedle, Mieszkanie* (House, Housing Estate, Flat) were the organs of the movement for housing reform, and the more mainstream *Architektura i Budownictwo* (AiB, Architecture and Construction) regularly reported on CIAM events and initiatives.¹¹



5 Polish contribution to *Rationelle Bauweisen*, 1931



6 S. Syrkus and Brutalski, WSM housing estate, Warsaw-Zoliborz, 1930-1934

From the late 1920s onwards, the Warsaw Housing Co-operative (Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, WSM) provided the Syrkus couple and the Brukalski couple with opportunities to build economic housing projects and to experiment with new solutions, thus also enhancing their standing in the CIAM.¹² Both the architects and the co-operative shared the social edge that was also the CIAM's hallmark. It is thus not by chance that the WSM functionaries Teodor Toeplitz and Stanisław Totwiński entered the small group of non-architects within the CIAM in the second half of the 1930s.¹³ This was due to their specific qualification as intermediary figures between architecture, economy and general social reform. They provided the statistics and data but also the funds for the far-reaching projects targeted at solving not only architectural problems in the strict sense.¹⁴

Beyond the structural reasons mentioned above, the Polish CIAM group was active and successful because it provided a forum for Polish architects to make international contacts and attain the

reputation that many of their Swiss, Dutch or German colleagues already had.¹⁵ [7] Moreover, in comparison to most other groups, there seem to have been no major conflicts or divisions in the group. Finally, modern architecture, though challenged, remained on the agenda in Poland up until 1939, that is to say much longer than in most other European countries. On the one hand the Modern Movement profited from the extreme need for economic housing under desperate economic conditions and progressive circles around the WSM with some political clout in the administration of Warsaw. On the other hand, and increasingly by the mid 1930s, the rising tide of nationalism in Poland, as elsewhere in Europe, led to denunciations of modern architecture and architects as foreign to the nation.



7 Quadrante, no. 8, December 1933, article about 'The functional outer wall'

Housing and Urban Planning in Warsaw

Warsaw became the capital of the re-established Polish state in 1918. Its urban extension quadrupled between 1916 and 1939.¹⁶ Its population almost doubled from some 700,000 inhabitants after the Russian retreat in 1915 to around 1,300,000 within the city boundaries and 1,900,000 within the so called metropolitan complex in 1939.¹⁷ Warsaw had not provided functions as an independent capital city for more than a century. Moreover, the housing and general urban situation was dramatic and regarded as one of the worst in Europe. This is one of the reasons the central state intervened very early on in Warsaw's urban politics. Planning bodies, which gained size and shape from the mid-1920s on, were set up to overcome the severe lack of basic statistical information.¹⁸

When in early 1933 it became apparent that the fourth congress could not be staged, as planned, in Moscow, Warsaw was considered for a brief moment.¹⁹ More important was that, if not in such a dramatic manner as in the Soviet Union, there seemed to be a promising experimental ground for CIAM's urban and architectural concepts. At a meeting in Warsaw in December 1932, Polish CIAM members had already energetically emphasized this very link.²⁰ Apparently, the Polish group could, 'as this is about the prestige of our country', as Szymon Syrkus stressed, also count on substantial political and administrative support – under the condition that Le Corbusier would give a talk. Szymon Syrkus explained that the Polish CIAM members would know all too well 'that Warsaw

would not be as attractive a place as that of the previous congress. But as it would be a case of positive working support,' Syrkus promised to establish good working conditions for the delegates and highlighted that 'our position concerning the current economic situation could be of rather great interest for colleagues working under similar conditions'.²¹

Urban Analysis

Already at the preparatory meeting on the Functional City in Berlin in June 1931, Szymon Syrkus had declared on behalf of the Polish group: 'I must stress, that for many cities it [the discussion about the Functional City] is not about utopian projects, planned in the blue. For us, e.g., it is deeply needed, and if a functional city will

- 6 For general information on the development of the education and professional organization of architects in Poland in the Interwar period see: Jan Minorski, *Polska nowatorska myśl architektoniczna w latach 1918–1939* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1970), 183; Tadeusz Barucki (ed.), *Fragmety stuletniej historii 1899–1999. Ludzie, Fakty Wydarzenia w Stulecie Organizacji Warszawskich Architektów* (Warsaw: Oddział Warszawski SARP, 2001); Lech Kłosiewicz, *Warszawska Szkoła Architektury, 1915–1965. 50-lecie Wydziału Architektury Politechniki Warszawskiej* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1967).
- 7 Mumford, CIAM, op. cit. (note 5), 26, 42.
- 8 Giedion, letters to Syrkus, 15.07.1933, 04.11.1933 and 10.07.1935, gta/CIAM.
- 9 Jadwiga Roguska, 'The Radical Avant-garde and Modernism in Polish Interwar Architecture', in: *Rassegna* vol. 13 no. 1 (1996), 14–26, here 17.
- 10 For this link see the paper 'La Question d'habitation en Pologne', presented by S. Syrkus to the CIAM, 25.11.1930, gta/CIAM.
- 11 Syrkus referred explicitly to the purpose 'der Propaganda des Kongresses wegen'; S. Syrkus, letter to Giedion, 13.09.1929 and 07.02.1930, gta/CIAM.
- 12 Elżbieta Mazur, 'Żoliborz - dzielnica obywateli', in: Wojciech Fałkowski (ed.), *Straty Warszawy 1939–1945. Raport* (Warsaw: Miasto Stołeczne, 2005), 140–163; Ute Caumanns, 'Mietskasernen und "Gläserne Häuser". Soziales Wohnen in Warschau zwischen Philanthropie und Genossenschaft, 1900–1939', in: Alena Janatková and Hanna Kozińska-Witt (eds.), *Wohnen in der Großstadt 1900–1939. Wohnsituation und Modernisierung im europäischen Vergleich* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 205–224.
- 13 On the role of Toeplitz and Tolwinski: Helena Syrkus, *Ku idei osiedla społecznego. 1925–1975* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1976), 74.
- 14 For Toeplitz's approach see his numerous articles in *Architektura i Budownictwo*: Teodor Toeplitz, 'Nowy sposoby budowlania', in: *Architektura i Budownictwo* vol. 4 no. 4 (1928), 129–147; for Stanisław Tołwiński, who became the president of Warsaw after the war, see his autobiography: S. Tołwiński, *Wspomnienia, 1895–1939*. Wyd. 1 (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1970), where he reflects on the role of Polish architects in the CIAM. See also Zofia Chyra-Rolicz, *Stanisław Tołwiński*. Wyd. 1 (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1987), 116–119; and his intervention at the CIAM 5 congress in Paris, gta/CIAM 5-4-36 D.
- 15 S. Syrkus published in the 1930s in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* and *de 8 en Opbouw*. See also Stanisław Brukalski, 'Abitazioni Operaie in Polonia', in: *Quadrante* no. 8 (December 1933), 28–35 and the pieces on *praesens* in: Theo van Doesburg, *On European Architecture. Complete Essays from Het Bouwbedrijf 1924–1931* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1990), 295–309, 319; on Syrkus see: Hélène Jannière, *Politiques éditoriales et architecture 'moderne'. L'Émergence de nouvelles revues en France et Italie (1923–1939)* (Paris: Éditions Arguments, 2002), 189–190.
- 16 Adam Jankiewicz and Joanna Porębska-Srebrna, 'Tradycje urbanistyczne Warszawy', in: Fałkowski (ed.), *Warszawy*, op. cit. (note 12), 34–59.
- 17 Edward D. Wynot, *Warsaw Between the World Wars. Profile of a Capital City in a Developing Land; 1918–1939* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983), 159, 175.
- 18 Jankiewicz and Porębska-Srebrna, 'Warszawy', op. cit. (note 16).
- 19 Originally it was planned to have a stopover for CIAM-members in Warsaw on their way to the congress in Moscow. See the reprinted invitation in: Martin Steinmann (ed.), *CIAM. Dokumente 1928–1939* (Basel/Stuttgart: Birkhäuser, 1979), 127. See also: Van Eesteren, letter to Giedion, 23.11.1932, gta/CIAM.
- 20 'Das Kollektiv PRAESENS Zp, der Verein Polnischer Architekten SAP, die Gesellschaft Polnischer Urbanisten TUP – deren Verwaltungen aus unsren Freunden bestehen, stellen sich den Arbeiten des CIRPAC zur Verfügung.' Syrkus, letter to Giedion, 22.11.1932, gta/CIAM.
- 21 S. Syrkus, letter to Giedion, 10.04.1933, gta/CIAM; Giedion, letter to S. Syrkus, 26.11.1932 and 29.03.1933, gta/CIAM. See also: Giedion, letter to Van Eesteren, 25.10.1932, gta/CIAM.

come into existence, this may happen soon, and would then no longer be a utopia.²² Indeed, in Warsaw many things were still in progress that were already fixed in the more developed Western European big cities, where they could thus no longer be the object of functionalist planning. With this in mind, it was only natural that Szymon Syrkus expressed little interest in the analytical preparation of the topic Functional City. For him the great lines had priority, as this was the only way the specific Polish and Warsaw problems could be met. Accordingly, he announced in Berlin that the 'praesens' group would prepare a draft on 'the new city of Warsaw' for the next congress, which would hardly deal with the existing city he regarded as having become obsolete.²³

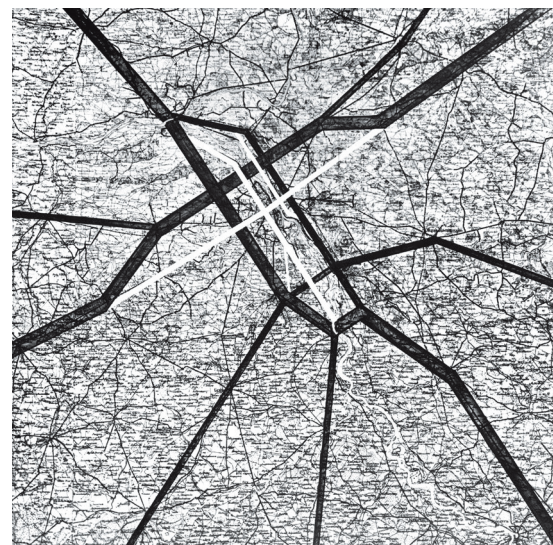
The activity of the Polish CIAM group on the *Patris II* was, however, not confined to the presentation of the maps on Warsaw. Szymon Syrkus gave a talk entitled 'Die Aussenwand im Skelettbau' and on the last evening of the congress the Brukalskis gave a talk entitled 'Habitations ouvrières en Pologne'.²⁴ Stanisław Brukalski also took part in the organization committee and, together with Roth, he headed a commission looking for opportunities to interest 'friends' in the CIAM. Szymon Syrkus (who participated on 1 August only) and Piotrowski were members of the commission concerned with the conclusions on the Functional City, Syrkus also took part in the press committee and, together with his wife Helena, was part of the group reflecting on the further development of the CIAM. Helena Syrkus was also a member of the committee that was occupied with the minutes of the congress.²⁵

Warsaw

Warsaw was in many respects a natural choice, as all of the active Polish CIAM members were based here and it was by far the most dynamic city in Poland and therefore the most interesting in an international context. Apparently, there were no deliberations to present any other Polish city. The three tables illustrate the functions of housing, work, recreation, traffic and Warsaw and its region in the standardized system that was developed by Cornelis van Eesteren, but without any accompanying photographs. The explanation given by Szymon Syrkus on the *Patris II* (31 July) and published in the *Technika Chronika* was rather brief and general. Syrkus stressed that the Vistula River was the decisive element for the development of the town. Moreover, he mentioned the fortress in the north of the inner city, erected by the Russian occupants in the nineteenth century (see the grey structure on left bank north of the northern bridge on map I), as having prevented

an organic development of the city until the end of the First World War. Now, north of the fortress, worker districts were to be developed. He also observed a tendency for decentralization and small scale rather than sweeping solutions.²⁶ Indeed, the maps reflect the great potential for development in the northwestern districts of the city. This territory could not be used due to military restrictions before 1918. But the territory was close to the city centre and was mainly public property, thus well suited for large-scale urban development. In fact, the street pattern of the new districts was conceived in a traditional vein. Nevertheless, on this pattern, in the very northwestern section, the modernist building projects of the WSM were erected.

Apparently, because of the general problem with the state of statistical information on Warsaw, it proved extremely difficult to gather the relevant data. The data used was mostly provided by the President of the City of Warsaw, the Office on Regulation and Land Survey (Biuro Regulacji i Pomiarów), the Office for the Regional Plan (Biuro Planu Regionalnego),²⁷ the Association of Polish Architects (Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich, SAP) and the Association of Polish Urbanists (Towarzystwa Urbanistów Polskich, TUP).



8 Warszawa Funkcjonalna, 1934, panel VII



9 Warszawa Funkcjonalna, 1934, panel IX

PL1

WARSAW, map I
→ 327

PL2

WARSAW, map II
→ 330

TUP members worked in important administrative positions and thus served as liaisons.²⁸ Data provided by the Public Institute for Hygiene (Państwowy Zakład Higieny) in Warsaw was used for the table illustrating the city's air pollution and was included in the exhibition after the fourth congress. This mapping, as Helena Syrkus states, was the first work of its kind in Europe.²⁹

Warszawa Funkcjonalna

It is, in contrast to what has been said about the early and intense engagement of the Polish group in the Functional City discussion, not a complete surprise that the group developed the so-called Warszawa Funkcjonalna Plan. [8/9/10/11] It was a result of the cooperation between Szymon Syrkus and Jan Olaf Chmielewski.³⁰ The plan was based on data provided by the Office for the Regional Plan and set up in collaboration with Stefan Zbigniew Różycki (geomorphological data), Tadeusz Tilling (waterways), Jerzy Hryniewicz (graphic illustration of tables) and Helena Syrkus (text-editing).³¹ It was concluded early in 1934 and published in Poland the same year – first by the TUP, then by the SARP, the association

of architects of the Republic of Poland (formerly SAP), including a French translation.

In a characteristic step, Chmielewski and Syrkus declared that their conclusions were not derived from the local conditions but rather from their collaboration with the CIAM. What they were looking for in the example of Warsaw were the factors and conditions of growth and ability to face a situation of crisis. Based on the logic of traffic and equipped with the toolkit of functional city planning, Chmielewski and Syrkus strove to level the differences between town and countryside by means of a broad zone branded Warszawa Maksymalna or Wmax stretching some 100 km in north-south and east-west-direction.³²

The Warszawa Funkcjonalna concept sparked great interest.³³ Helena Syrkus translated the text into German and French. At the same time, she presented the concept to the CIAM group in Zurich at one of its regular meetings.³⁴ On the basis of the positive feedback from the Zurich group, in particular Karl Moser, and supported by Hans Bernoulli and Nicolaus Kelen, the plan was put on the agenda for the delegates meeting in May 1934 in London.³⁵ Apparently, Warszawa Funkcjonalna caused long and intense discussions. While Le Corbusier, on one side, saw the plan as embodying a new level and opening new horizons of opportunities to urbanists, others did not share his enthusiasm, but generally

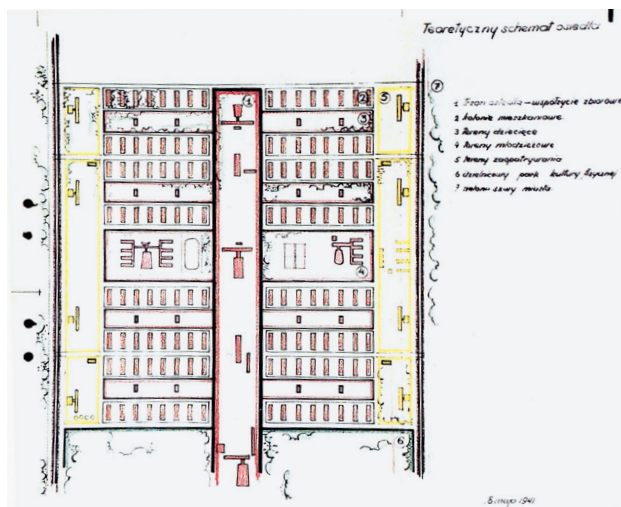


10 Warszawa Funkcjonalna, 1934, panel XI

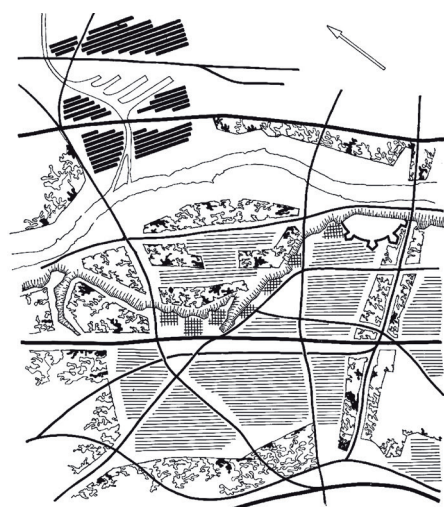


11 Warszawa Funkcjonalna, 1934, panel XIII

- 22 'Die Stellungnahmen zu den Richtlinien', Polish Group, 06.06.1931, HNI/EFL EEST IV.30, reprinted in: Steinmann, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 19), 117. See also: Martin Kohlrausch, 'Die CIAM und die Internationalisierung der Architektur. Das Beispiel Polen', in: *CLIO-Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2007), 1-7. <http://www.europa.clio-online.de/2007/Article=258> (24.08.2012).
- 23 Steinmann, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 19).
- 24 The paper was published in Italian: Barbara Brukalska, 'Abitazioni operaie in Polonia', in: *Quadrante* no. 8 (December 1933), 28-35.
- 25 Steinmann, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 19), 140; Adolph Stiller, 'CIAM. Die erste Periode der Internationalen Kongresse für Neues Bauen (CIAM) und die polnische Beteiligung: eine Chronologie' in: Idem (ed.), *Polen. Architektur* (Salzburg: Pustet, 2008), 73-84, here 80; Kees Somer, *The Functional City. The CIAM and Cornelis van Eesteren, 1928-1960* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007), 169, 172-173; Mumford, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 5), 78, 81, 85.
- 26 Szymon Syrkus, 'Varsovie', in: *Technika Chronika* no. 44/45/46 (October/November 1933), 1171. A longer version was published in: *Architektura i Budownictwo* no. 8 (1933).
- 27 See the respective memo on the regional-plan of Warsaw in the Van Eesteren papers by Stanisław Rózański, HNI/EFL EEST IV.77.
- 28 S. Syrkus, letter to Giedion, 25.05.1932, gta/CIAM. It was not possible to show aerial pictures of Warsaw and its region as these were classified as strictly confidential by the authorities. H. Syrkus, *Ideji*, op. cit. (note 13), 134.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Jan Chmielewski and Szymon Syrkus, *Warszawa funkcjonalna* (Warsaw: Wyd. Towarzystwa Urbanistów Polskich, 1934). Chmielewski was one of the main advocates of far reaching ideas of a systematic use of land in Poland and speaker of the leading group of urban planners 'U'. On Chmielewski see: Adam Kotarbinski, 'The Developing Career and Thoughts of Jan Olaf Chmielewski', in: *Planning History* vol. 21 no. 1 (1999), 6-12.
- 31 H. Syrkus, *Ideji*, op. cit. (note 13), 149.
- 32 Bolesław Małisz, 'Functional Warsaw. A Challenge from the Past', in: *Planning Perspectives* vol. 2 (1987), 254-269; Adam Czystewski, 'Town and Regional Planning', 38-47 and Adam Miłobedzki, 'Polish Architecture in the Period 1918-1939', both in: *Rassegna* vol. 13 no. 1 (1996), 6-13.
- 33 Gropius had these plans analysed through the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen. Teresa Czaplinksa-Archer, 'Polish Architecture. The Contribution of Helena and Szymon Syrkus', in: *Architectural Association Quarterly* vol. 13 (1981), 37-44.
- 34 Among others Giedion, Karl Moser and Werner Max Moser, Alfred and Emil Roth, Max Ernst Haefeli and Rudolf Steiger took part, H. Syrkus, *Ideji*, op. cit. (note 13), 155-157.
- 35 H. Syrkus, *Ideji*, op. cit. (note 13), 157. Besides the members of the delegates board, Raymond Unwin, Frederic Osborn, Patrick Abercrombie and Hans Bernoulli, among others, took part in the meeting, see: Mumford, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 5), 92.



12 Scheme of a neighbourhood unit, PAU group, 1941



13 H. Syrkus and the PAU group, neighbourhood unit, 1941

approved of the plan. It was controversial, however, if the plan was to be announced a model for the next congress, it would be titled 'The Functional City – Synthesis'. Josep Lluís Sert and Ernest Weissmann supported Le Corbusier's position, but the Dutch, German and Swiss groups, insisting on a thorough analysis, were more skeptical. In this, the study was also an example of the well known divisions within the CIAM.³⁶ Finally, however, the plan was announced as the model and, moreover, in a conclusion signed by Walter Gropius, Sert, Le Corbusier and Wells Coates; the delegates tried to pressure the President of Warsaw into implementing the scheme.³⁷

It was not by chance that Szymon Syrkus became a prominent figure in the CIAM after presenting *Warszawa Funkcjonalna*.³⁸ The plan was still present in the 1936 meeting in La Sarraz and was to influence the CIAM's stance on regional planning.³⁹ It would certainly have played an important role 1937 in Paris, had the overall topic not been redirected away from the Functional City.⁴⁰

Thus the echo of *Warszawa Funkcjonalna*, both inside and beyond CIAM, highlights again the specific engagement of Polish architects in the CIAM. While the Polish architects could gain international attention and prestige, the CIAM could, at least potentially, come close to a realization of its mainly theoretical assumptions.⁴¹

Still, the gap between theoretical planning and the practical demands of planning 'on the ground' diverged immensely. This problem was highlighted by Martin Wagner in a memo to Gropius and the Syrkus couple of March 1935. Wagner contrasted the top-down approach taken by Chmielewski and Szymon Syrkus with his own concept of a thorough analysis of economic conditions and traffic.⁴² In a similar way, Van Eesteren criticized the plan for a lack of thoroughness while Gropius applauded the strong gesture.⁴³

Tellingly, during the war the concept attained new relevance. The plan was further developed by the 'Underground Urbanist Working Group' (Pracownia Architektoniczno-Urbanistyczna, PAU).⁴⁴ [12/13] In view of the ever more brutal destruction of the city and the nationalization of real estate within the city boundaries, a true Functional City only became more realistic. The vision was soon to be crushed by the dominance of socialist realism, however.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, in a number of respects the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw was influenced by the *Warszawa Funkcjonalna* concept.⁴⁶

36 See the respective protocol: HNI/EFL EEST IV.101, 7. The board decided to have the document translated into English, German and French. In 1935 a Spanish edition came out, Matisz, *Functional*, op. cit. (note 32), 254–269, 257–258.

37 The letter to Marian Zyndam-Kościałkowski is reprinted in: H. Syrkus, *Idej*, op. cit. (note 13), 159.

38 Giedion, letter to S. Syrkus, 17.05.1935, gta/CIAM.

39 The plans for Warsaw served as a model for regional planning within the CIAM. See: 'Bericht der Kommission für die Darstellung der Arbeiten', 17.09.1936, gta/CIAM; Somer, *City*, op. cit. (note 25), 197.

40 Important aspects of the plan are taken up in S. Syrkus's 'Rapport no 3 – Cas d'application: régions et campagnes' for CIAM 5, reprinted in: Steinmann, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 19), 196–199. The potential of regional planning was to become a major topic in the 'CIAM-Ost' organization, founded in 1937, but due to rising international tensions this was short-lived. See: Monika Platzer, 'Die CIAM und ihre Verbindungen nach Zentraleuropa', in: Monika Platzer and Eve Blau (eds.), *Mythos Großstadt. Architektur und Stadtbaukunst in Zentraleuropa. 1890–1937* (Munich: Prestel, 1999), 227–231.

41 When an exhibition on the topic 'Functional City' was planned in Warsaw, with support of 'the most relevant authorities' Giedion pushed Van Eesteren to strongly support the matter. Giedion, letter to Van Eesteren, 30.09.1935, Bauhaus-Archiv, Gropius-Papers (12/422). See also Giedion's 'inquiries' into how many copies of a potential publication of *The Functional City* could be sold in Poland, Giedion, letter to the Syrkus couple, 10.07.1935, Bauhaus-Archiv, Gropius-Papers (12/447). The first Polish edition of *La Charte d'Athènes* was published in 1947.

42 Martin Wagner, 'Die funktionelle Stadt. Eine kritische Betrachtung zur Klärung des Begriffs der funktionellen Stadt im Anschluss an die Arbeit der polnischen Gruppen "Praesens" und "U" über das städtebauliche Problem von Warschau' (08.03.1935), Bauhaus-Archiv, Gropius-Papers, CIAM-Papers II 129, file 24, 12.

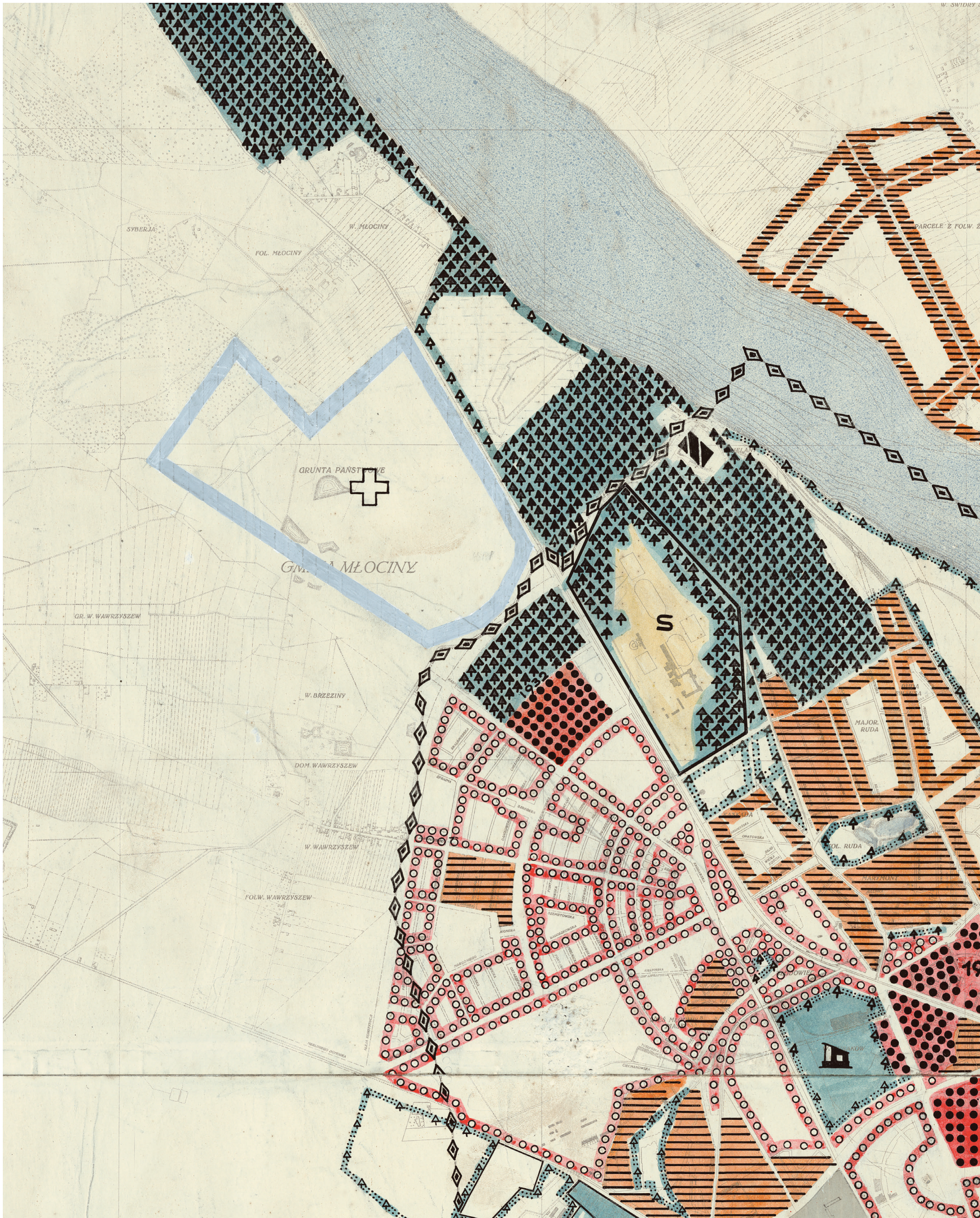
43 Reginald Isaacs, *Walter Gropius*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1984), 728; Somer, *City*, op. cit. (note 25), 196. For Le Corbusier's later interest in the plan see: Mumford, *CIAM*, op. cit. (note 5), 153.

44 Barbara Klain, 'City Planning in Warsaw', in: Koos Bosma and Helma Hellinga (eds.), *Mastering the City. North European City Planning 1900–2000* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1997), 112–127; Martin Kohlrausch, 'Warschau im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Besatzungspolitik und Stadtplanung', in: Fritz Mayrhofer and Ferdinand Oppl (eds.), *Stadt und Nationalsozialismus* (Linz: Österreichisches Arbeitskreis für Stadtgeschichtsforschung, 2008), 23–42.

45 David Crowley, 'Paris or Moscow? Warsaw Architects and the Image of the Modern City in the 1950s', in: *Kritika* vol. 9 no. 4 (2008), 769–797; Matisz, *Functional*, op. cit. (note 32), 254–269; Anders Åman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 126; Alicja Szmelter, 'Kilka uwag o wątkach planowania urbanistycznego okresu międzywojennego w planach Birua Odbudowy Stolicy', in: *Architekt warszawski i mazowiecki. Informacje OW SARP* (November 2005), I–V.

46 *Physical Planning and Housing in Poland 1946. Including Polish Reports for the Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning in Hastings, October 7th to 12th, 1946* (Warsaw: Trzaska, Evert & Michalski Ltd. and E. Kuthan, 1946), 3–26.

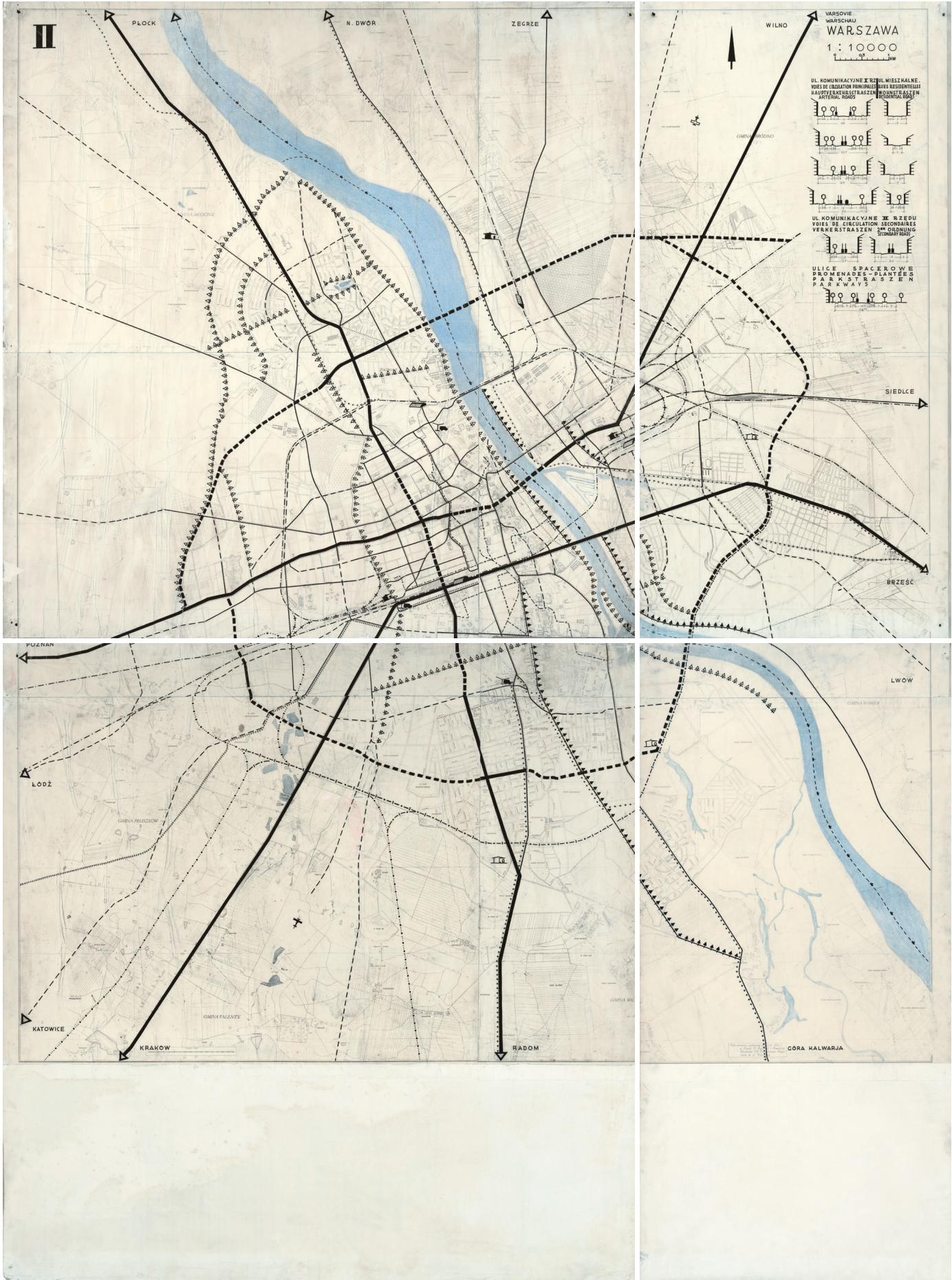


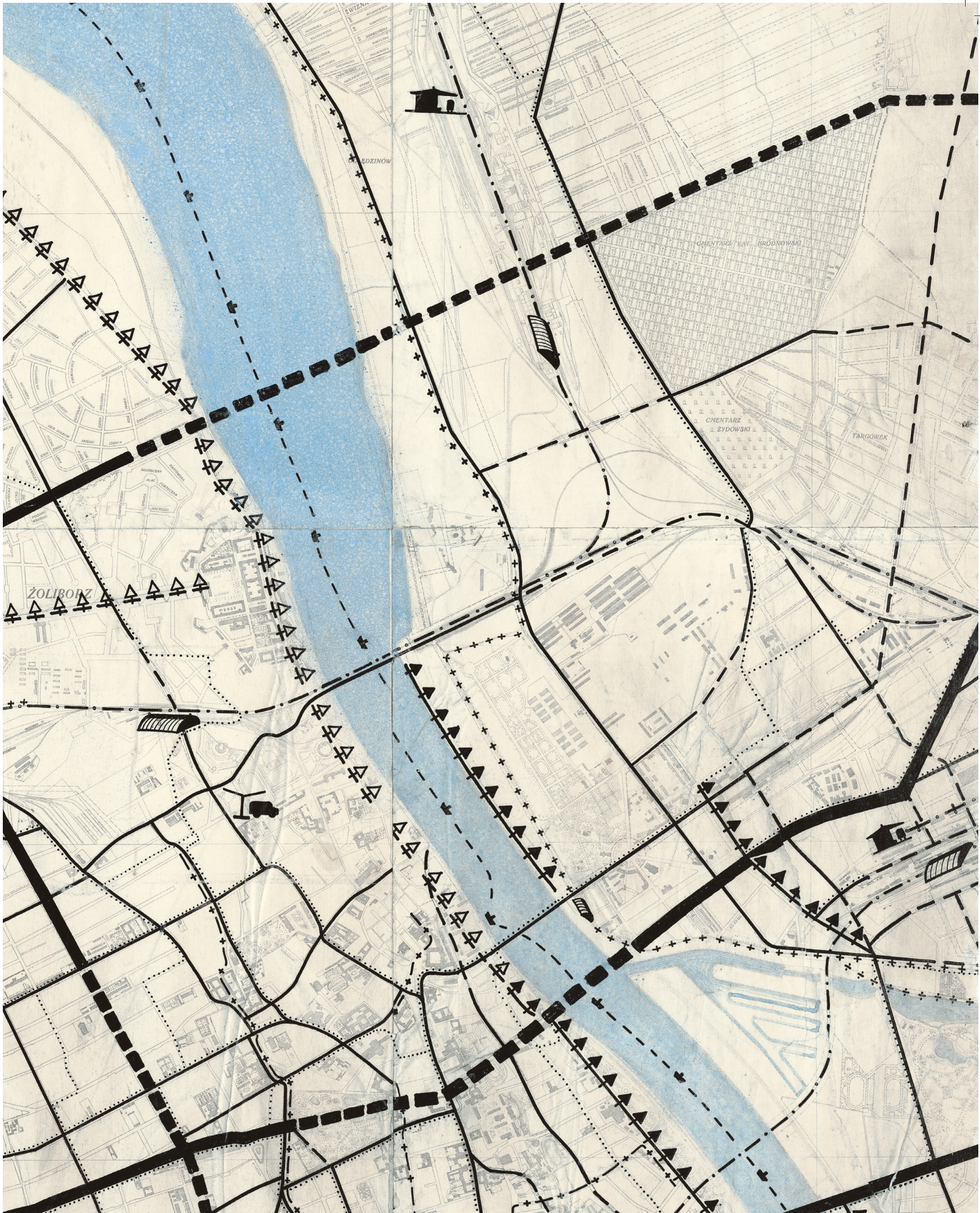


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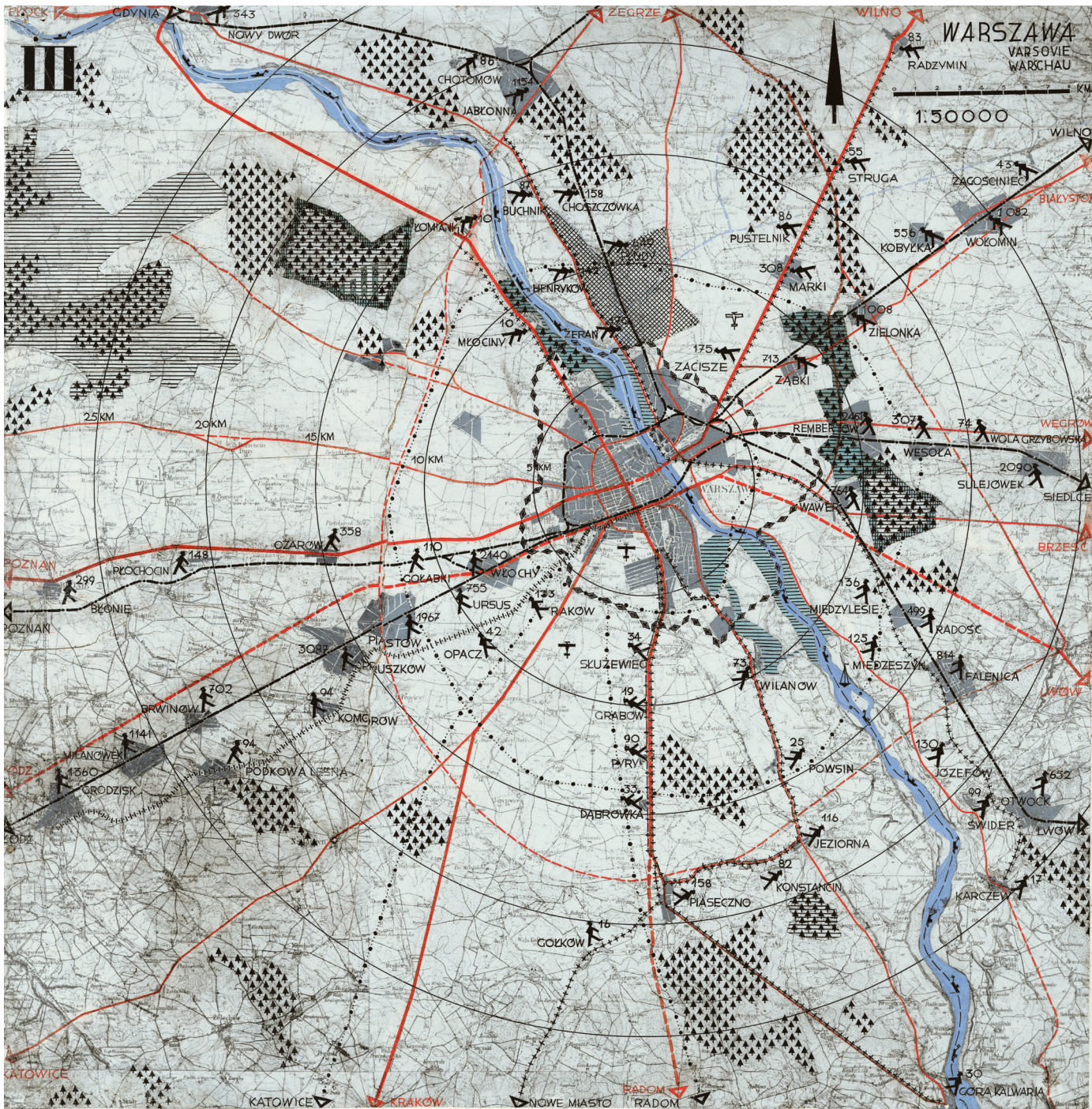






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Sources

As a result of the extreme suffering of both the city of Warsaw and most of the Polish CIAM-members during the German occupation in the Second World War and the ensuing destruction of archives, the source material on the Polish group is scarce and scattered. The remaining papers of Helena and Szymon Syrkus – Szymon was imprisoned in Auschwitz during the war – are kept in the archive of the Polish Museum of Architecture in Wrocław (Muzeum Architektury we Wrocławiu) but are not yet inventoried. For more see: Martin Kohlrausch, 'Szymon Syrkus. Die Stadt imaginieren im Angesicht der Katastrophe. Warschau 1939–1950', in: *Historische Anthropologie* vol. 18 (2010), 404–422.

References to the group's work may be found in the correspondence of Szymon Syrkus with Giedion at the gta Archives, and that with Gropius at the Bauhaus-Archiv and Van Eesteren at Het Nieuwe Instituut (formerly the Netherlands Architecture Institute). Interestingly, both for the general history of the CIAM and the Polish group, is the exchange Helena Syrkus had with Martin Steinmann and Roth in the 1970s – and in the latter case up until 1982 – on the events some 40 years before. There are also recorded interviews Steinmann made with Helena Syrkus at the gta Archives, which add atmospheric detail and valuable information on the self-understanding of the group. Roth also wrote an obituary on Helena Syrkus, which is kept in his papers.

A single study devoted to the Polish CIAM group does not exist. There is, however, rich literature on the Polish architectural avant-garde in the interwar period. A good overview in English is provided by the articles in: Adam Milobedzki, 'Polish Architecture in the Period 1918–1939', in: *Rassegna* vol. 13 no. 1 (1996), 6–13; Wojciech Leśnikowski, 'Functionalism in Polish Architecture', in: Wojciech Leśnikowski (ed.), *East European Modernism. Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary & Poland between the Wars 1919–1939* (New York: Rizzoli, 1996), 203–285; and in: Olgierd Czermer, *Avant-garde polonaise. Urbanisme, architecture 1918–1939* (Paris: Éditions du Moniteur, 1981), 49–63 and 247–254. The most important sources are the two books by Helena Syrkus, in part memories of the Polish and general CIAM activity, in part an analytical history of the CIAM: *Ku idei osiedla społecznego. 1925–1975* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1976) and, with only partially new information: *Spółeczne Cele Urbanizacji. Człowiek i środowisko* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn. Naukowe, 1984).

For literature about Brukalski see: Roberta Chionne, 'Blok e Praesens. Dagli ideali del costruttivismo alla sperimentazione funzionalista' in: Silvia Parlagreco (ed.), *Costruttivismo in Polonia* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005) (Nuova cultura, 114), 157–198 and Tadeusz Mycek, *Spotkania z mistrzami. Portrety 63 architektów polskich* (Warsaw: NASK 1998), 103–105. For Piotrowski: Aleksander Gieysztor and Janusz Durko (eds.), *Warszawa. Jej Dzieje i Kultura* (Warsaw: Arkady, 1980). The most thorough publications about the Syrkus couple are: Teresa Czaplinksa-Archer, 'Polish Architecture. The Contribution of Helena and Szymon Syrkus' in: *Architectural Association Quarterly* vol. 13 (1981), 37–44; Józef Piłatowicz, 'Poglądy Heleny i Szymona Syrkusów na architekturę w latach 1925–1956', in: *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* vol. 54 no. 3–4 (2009), 123–164; Niels Gutschow and Barbara Klain, *Vernichtung und Utopie. Stadtplanung Warschau 1939–1945* (Hamburg: Junius, 1994).

Biographies

Stanisław Brukalski

Polish architect (Warsaw 1894–1967 Warsaw). Brukalski was one of the most important representatives of functionalism in interwar Poland. He studied architecture in Milan and Warsaw. He was a member of the group of avant-garde artists 'praesens' and thus automatically of CIAM from 1929 on. Together with his wife he gave a talk on worker's housing estates at the CIAM 4 congress. With his wife Barbara, he was responsible for a number of the housing estates of the Warsaw housing co-operative WSM built from the late 1920s on in Warsaw. These were aesthetically innovative structures with a strong emphasis on the social dimension of housing. Brukalski was one of the architects of the Polish pavilion for the world exhibition in Paris 1937. He took part in the defense of Poland in 1939 and became a German POW. After the war Brukalski was

professor of housing construction at the Faculty of Architecture at Warsaw Polytechnic University.

Roman Piotrowski

Polish architect (Nowy Targ 1895–1988 Warsaw). Piotrowski was an important representative of the Modern Movement in Poland. He studied architecture at the Polytechnic Universities of Lwów and Warsaw. Like the Syrkus couple and Brukalski, he was a member of the 'praesens' group and thus from 1929 on of the CIAM. During the CIAM 4 congress Piotrowski was a member of the commission concerned with the conclusions on the Functional City. Also, from 1937 on, Piotrowski became CIAM-delegate. From 1930 to 1934 he worked as an architect for the Polish Public Insurance ZUS. From 1934 until the end of the war he was the technical director of the Polish Association for Worker's housing (TOR). During the war he was part of the underground workshop PAU, which he headed together with Helena Syrkus from 1942 onwards. In 1945 Piotrowski became head of the Bureau for the Reconstruction of Warsaw (BOS). He held important political positions in communist Poland and in the planning organizations of the country.

Helena Syrkus

Polish architect (Warsaw 1900–1981 Warsaw). Helena Syrkus was an important representative of functionalist architecture in Poland. She was the wife and professional partner of Szymon Syrkus. She studied architecture at Warsaw Polytechnic University from 1918 to 1923 and was a member of 'praesens' group of avant-garde artists and CIAM from 1929 on. She played an important part in the organization of CIAM 4. She participated in the group reflecting the further development of the CIAM and was a member of the committee that was occupied with the minutes of the congress. After the occupation of Warsaw, Syrkus took part in the underground Workshop for Architecture and Urbanism (PAU), which she headed after the imprisonment of her husband Szymon in 1942. She herself was imprisoned in January 1945. After her release in May 1945 she headed the information department of the Bureau for the reconstruction of Warsaw (BOS). Together with her husband Szymon, she completed the Koło housing project in Warsaw in 1950. During the CIAM 7 congress 1949 in Bergamo, Syrkus publicly denounced modernist architecture in favour of socialist realism. After the death of Szymon, Helena took over 'his' chair in housing at Warsaw Polytechnic University.

Szymon Syrkus

Polish architect (Grodno 1893–1964 Warsaw). Szymon Syrkus was one of the foremost functionalist architects of Central Eastern Europe in the interwar period. He was a pioneer of industrialized housing construction, co-operative housing projects and the insulation of buildings. Syrkus studied from 1912 to 1917 at the Polytechnic Universities of Vienna, Graz, Riga and the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, and the Polytechnic University Warsaw. From 1922 to 1924 he was in Paris and Berlin and visited the Bauhaus. He was also well known in Western Europe, in particular for the urban plan Warszawa Funkcjonalna. He was an active CIAM member from 1929 onwards. During the CIAM 4 congress he gave a talk on the 'The functional outer wall' and took part in the press committee and the group reflecting on the further development of the CIAM. From 1937 on Syrkus headed the CIAM's committee on regional planning. In October 1942, he was imprisoned in Auschwitz and liberated in a Bavarian camp in 1945. Until 1947 he was a key actor in Warsaw's reconstruction. From 1949 until his death he was professor at the Faculty of Architecture at Warsaw Polytechnic University.